



Laura W. Bush Traveling Fellowship Reports

July 29, 2013

(Part II)

Table of Contents

Kaitlynn Bartz, Summer 2012 <i>Reducing ethnic discrimination against the Serbian Romas through education reform and intercultural dialogue</i>	3
Saira Husain, Fall 2012 <i>Prevention of Acute Gastroenteritis in Pakistan Children</i>	14
Carolyn Pelnik, Fall 2012 <i>A Geo Health Alliance: Collaboration to Increase Potable Water Access in Lake Atitlan, Guatemala</i>	18
Lacy Scott Williams, Fall 2012 <i>Community Compost & Garden for Local Food Security in Ngongongare, Tanzania</i>	23
Marissa Reitsma, Spring 2013 <i>The Intersection of Culture and Health: A Mixed-Method Investigation into the Effect of Tribal Affiliation on Accumulation of Drug Resistance Mutations and Treatment Failure in Kenya</i>	27
Inesha Premaratne, Fall 2013 <i>GrowLanka: Closing the Information Gap in Post-Civil War Sri Lanka</i>	31



Kaitlynn Bartz, Summer 2012

Roma in Serbia: A marginalized, ethnic minority in a sprouting democracy

Acknowledging success and identifying necessities for improving living conditions and reducing ethnic tensions between the marginalized ethnic Roma and ethnic Serbs in an emerging democracy.

The following is an executive summary of the discoveries made by a UNESCO Laura W. Bush Traveling Fellow who was awarded the opportunity to live in Serbia from June – August, 2012. While in Serbia the Fellow, **Kaitlynn Kelly M. Bartz**, recorded the stories of present-day ethnic discrimination against Roma, organized community-building initiatives for reducing discrimination, and purposefully established a youth leadership training program. A native of Portland, Oregon, Ms. Bartz is currently studying International Affairs and Public Policy at the George Washington University in Washington, DC

Preface:

Think of Serbia. What comes to mind? Do you think of a nation with a tumultuous path or a country ravaged by war? Perhaps you reflect on the conflict with Kosovo or the 1999 NATO bombings. Maybe your thoughts drift historically towards Josip Broz Tito's communism and the ethnically fueled disintegration of Yugoslavia. Or perhaps you think of Slobodan Milosevic's war crimes and his policies which furthered ethnic hatred in the region. In the minds of many Westerners, Serbia is synonymous with ethnic tension, violence, poverty, unemployment, and emigration. While these descriptors are true, they minimize Serbia's complex contemporary identity. Serbian culture, history, and people are by-products of the country's geopolitical position and thus strangely intertwined and yet separated from its neighbors. Politics, culture, and economics of the East and West collide in Serbia. In searching for its cultural identity, Serbia earns international attention and loses foreign interest at almost the same speed. With these preconceived notions -- some misconceived and others strikingly accurate -- I embarked on a seven-week trip to explore Serbia's internal tensions that are manifesting externally.

With the generous support of the U.S. National Commission for UNESCO Laura W. Bush Traveling Fellowship, I traveled throughout Serbia from June 19, 2012 to August 7, 2012 conducting interviews with government and non-profit leaders, members of civil society, youth,

and individuals without specific titles or categories.¹ My trip started and concluded in the northern capital city of Belgrade. However, I spent most of my time in the southern towns of Nis and Leskovac. The level of poverty and the intensity of ethnic tensions exponentially increase as one travels further from the Belgrade. Recent findings by the European Commission and the United States Central Intelligence Agency verify that Serbia's population consists of five prominent ethnic minority groups with current nationwide unemployment at 23.4%.² This high unemployment and ethnic diversity manifests instability disproportionately in southern Serbia.

Improving living standards for southern Serbs and Roma required first discovering what Serbians ~~collectively desire and how the~~ international community can provide support. Illumination came from many sources including Serbian families who opened their homes and their hearts and community leaders who shared personal insight on local conflicts and challenges. To my gracious Serbian hosts, my consistent hometown supporters (Oregon) and my academic guides at The George Washington University (Washington D.C.) who helped me process hours of

¹ Appendix A provides a brief overview of these interviews. Each interview is represented by an image of the subject and a few select quotes. Most interviews lasted approximately 90 minutes. Quotes for this executive summary have been paraphrased due to space restrictions. These interviews, in their entirety, will be used as foundational research for my undergraduate thesis.

² *Serbia: Growth and Fiscal Challenges*. Issue brief no. 32. European Commission..
<http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/eu/forecasts/2012_spring/cc_serbia_en.pdf>.
"Serbia." *The World Factbook*. Central Intelligence Agency, 16 Oct. 2012.
<<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ri.html>>.

interviews, volumes of notebooks, and an overwhelming number of ideas, I express my sincerest gratitude. While the gains from this experience are both scholarly and humanitarian, the greatest benefits are relational. This trip would not have been possible alone. Thank you for your continuous support and encouragement.

Executive Summary:

My trip initially focused on discrepancies in accessing public education between the Roma and ethnic Serbs. In my naiveté I expected to find long-standing discrimination in the education system similar to the “separate, but equal” discrimination in the United States’ civil rights era. Within the first few days of my arrival, I realized this frame of reference was flawed for several reasons including:

- discrimination in Serbia is not limited by skin color,
- there is an extreme international pressure to eliminate discrimination in the region,
- contemporary challenges must be overcome in the context of a history of ethnic hatred, discrimination, and violence, and
- the term “discrimination” is widely defined, but narrowly interpreted.

My reference point missed the significant roles poverty, cultural identity, gender bias and

economic conditions play in perpetuating discrimination and preventing sustained progress in inclusion.

Simply defined “discrimination” reflects one’s pre-conceived judgment. Just as negative connotations produce negative interactions, intentionally constructed experiences can generate positive associations. Rather than focusing on their differences, Roma and Serb need to see what they share.³ In identifying common ground they will look to help someone in need from a mutual perspective. Empathetic individuals are empowered by uplifting others rather than minimizing their existence. In this context, international advocates (individuals, state institutions, or international organizations) need to engage in both top down and grassroots activities. These efforts must be sustainable beyond human and capital resources from abroad. Thus, progress made must be self-sustaining. The Roma’s plight in Serbia requires international pressure and support while practical programs must be implemented domestically.

³ According to UNDP, “‘Roma’ is not just a ‘meta-group’, an umbrella term encompassing different sub-groups. It is also a complex construct comprised of (and associated with) a myriad of diverse characteristics. Different sides involved (the groups in question, governments, international organizations) use the term as an intellectual shortcut ascribing to it different meaning.” In Serbia some Roma are official citizens and some have lived in the country for generations. What separates these two ethnicities is both obvious and ambiguous. During my trip I discovered that skin color and socioeconomic status aid in the separation, but the division can be both self-inflicted and enforced by those in a stronger social position. Ivanov, Andrey. "Defining the Roma: Implications for Policy." *UNDP - Europe and Central Asia*. United Nations Development Programme, 19 Apr. 2012. Web. <<http://europeandcis.undp.org/ourwork/governance/show/8FC9D104-F203-1EE9-BEF85E2860D69871>>.

At the onset I believed the discrimination -- rather overt or relatively hidden -- would be disguised in other forms and largely the result of historically repetitive social experiences. Overcoming these social tensions requires Serbians from all ethnic backgrounds participate in activities jointly. Serbians taught me that changing discrimination in their education system would necessitate all students *participate* in life together without barriers. While touring Serbia it rapidly became clear that increasing social inclusion among local youth would aid in the reduction of ethnically-charged discrimination. Jelena Despotović, Children and Youth Coordinator for The United Nation’s Joint Program for Peacebuilding and Inclusive Local Development (PBILD), expanded on this notion in her interview:

“They don’t understand the cultural similarities they have. They have the same needs, but life for Roma is more difficult...putting them in the same situation makes them feel they are equal...which is true.”

Reducing ethnic tensions between ethnic Roma and ethnic Serbs through social inclusion and youth development became the primary objective of my trip. Therefore maintaining a flexible attitude and open agenda was essential as each day’s labors varied greatly. Daily activities included doling out humanitarian aid to impoverished community members, teaching young Serbians English, or interviewing senior dignitaries such as the Project Coordinator for

Governance and Social Inclusion with the (PBILD).

One of my personal initiatives involved bringing together Roma and Serb youth ages 13-20 for an evening activity. Work done by the Leskovac Evangelical Church (LEC) reflects such multi-faceted thinking. This faith-based group is recognized by government agencies for their work in the Roma community and actively supported my work while in Serbia. As a respected institution in civil society, LEC hosts medical clinics, international speakers, and aid workers along with services for the Serb majority, Roma minority, and the growing population of Chinese immigrants. The pastors intentionally lead by example as they coordinate multi-ethnic weekly leadership meetings. These meetings generate a better understanding of the needs within the various fellowships that now meet separately in order to accommodate the language barrier.

Recognizing the value relationships can have in closing divides, I expanded LEC's model. As a natural outgrowth of the work done by senior LEC leadership, I brought the Serb and Roma youth together for a youth meeting and skit night. It was a novel opportunity that could open communication between the two distinct groups. Rather than organizing something completely unfamiliar for them, and thus less sustainable, I called upon the Serb youth to engage with the Roma during the Roma youth's typical gathering time. The confidence and enthusiasm the Serb youth portrayed prior to entering the large community room faded as their Roma counterparts began singing, dancing, and clapping as customary in their traditional culture. Observing the Serbs' stiff stance and widened eyes, I identified their unfamiliarity with being the observing minority rather than the participating majority. Debriefing with two Serb girls after the meeting enhanced the value of simply facilitating interactions and building youth confidence and motivation to live beyond their comfort zone. Seventeen year-old Petra reflected, *"I really enjoyed our meeting with the Roma [youth] because it is nice to know that we are not alone in the challenges we face at school."* University graduate Tamara piped in, *"I would like to do that again."*

Upon arriving in Serbia I anticipated that structured day camps would expand such multi-ethnic youth interaction. Hopeful that the Roma and Serb youth working together could overcome ethnic barriers as they both discovered their similarities and valued their uniqueness while sharing accessible resources. In practice many Roma youth worked seasonal jobs supporting their families and were thus unable to meet regularly with me during my stay. While this was initially a major setback to my proposed project, the situation created a shift in application resulting in one of my most important sustainable discoveries: the privileged majority are most effective at empowering disadvantaged minorities. As I began to understand the value of the majority actively supporting the minority, I re-focused my project on developing relationships with the Serb majority and coaching their youth leaders to develop their skills in helping others gain access to the opportunities the Serbs already received.

Young Tamara met me with an open heart and an open mind. Her love for her family, friends, and community was evident in our first conversation: *"I want to serve. Maybe what you have in mind is why I have finished my degree and cannot find a job."* As I identified the need for a youth leader, it became apparent that Tamara had the necessary education and life experience for

the job. By building her confidence and leadership skills, Tamara could continue meeting the needs of her community long after my return to the United States.

In the hours Tamara and I spent teaching each other – Tamara teaching me about her culture and me teaching Tamara about leadership development and social inclusion – we developed an agenda for Youth Leadership Week-end. Utilizing resources from LEC, we hosted a dozen Serbian youth who learned the significance of being outward oriented. We worked through personal trials and challenges collectively. Together we identified how their community would positively change by building relationships with those outside of one's immediate friend group.

After several weeks of interviewing government officials, church leaders, non-profit directors, and community volunteers, it became apparent that ethnic Roma girls had few opportunities to develop their talents and abilities. Forced to grow-up at a young age, these Roma girls not only lost the simplicity of childhood, but had few women older than themselves investing in their development. While working with Roma youth last summer, "Girls' Night" was created. "Girls' Night" provided a venue for developing female mentoring relationships with Roma and Serbian women in Leskovac. While painting finger nails and chatting through a translator, I shared stories about my favorite female heroes, my life back in the United States, and encouraged their self-esteem by acknowledging their personal value regardless of their circumstances. I implored them to not let anyone ever diminish their value as a student, a woman, and a leader. After making myself vulnerable, I opened the conversation for questions. Their questions mainly revolved around school, boys, American life and my post-college aspirations.

Before we concluded the evening, I asked, "What would you like to do after you graduate high school?" These girls were some of the few ethnic Roma who were set to earn a high school diploma and potentially an advanced degree. I expected to see their eyes light up as they would shout over each other in effort to divulge their exciting career plans and dreams for life after high school. Instead, the response I received was much more united and seemingly out of place: roaring laughter. With an uneasy grin I turned to my translator learning I had asked a cultural naive question. A timid girl waited for the laughter to die down and asserted, "After graduation, we must be married and have children. That is it. There are no other options." Returning home that evening with my Serbian host sister I contemplated the tragedy of their reality. Young girls with so much internal potential would not see the fruition of their gifts and abilities because of external forces. Their future was not just outside of their control, but as far as they could see, could never change. These students did not just need better access to education; they also needed to value themselves enough to fight for choices. Roma youth need internal motivation supplemented by self-confidence and reinforced by individuals within their community. It is essential that Serbian youth of all ethnicities receive encouragement in their educational endeavors rather than reinforcing restrictive cultural norms which negated their individual giftedness and personal desires.

Unlike many Roma who are now accustomed to international aid on their behalf, many Serbs have a different experience. It was striking how resistant some Serbs were to my work because they felt all support was going to the racially marginalized rather than those who were ostracized because of their socioeconomic status. One evening my host family introduced me to Sarah, an

unemployed mother of two whose husband was in a mental hospital.⁴ Upon learning about my focus on the Roma, she admonished me describing her frustration with international aid workers supporting the popularly disenfranchised rather than those who “called Serbia their home and were still struggling to survive.” Her ethnicity might not connect her with the need for emergency aid, but her children were frail, often eating no more than a daily potato. Although Sarah’s daughter occasionally interacted with Roma youth at LEC, she was weary of allowing her to build relationships with any members of the ethnicity who appeared to be taking away resources from her and her family. The international community’s appropriation of resources domestically inadvertently fuels more adversity. Need, not greed, seemingly enhanced by foreigners perpetuates the problem.

My primary objectives were:

- improve access and usability of educational resources to the marginalized Roma, and
- increase unity between the two distinct cultures (Serbian and Roma).

⁴ Sarah is a pseudonym to protect the identity of the woman who provided me with this perspective.

Prior to departure, I detailed an action plan as to aid in accomplishing these abstract objectives during my brief trip. I was to identify differences in the quality and accessibility of education ethnic Romas and ethnic Serbs receive, find examples where the education system perpetuates and resolves discrimination against the Romas, determine the variance in ethnic tensions and discrimination within the public classroom versus the local church, and evaluate how a service- based, education program can be implemented or supported by public school curriculum. The primary roadblocks for accomplishing all objectives were:

- lack of access to Roma children who were helping their families with seasonal work, and
- finding primary school teachers available for interviews during the vacation months.

While this initially made my objectives unrealistic, these setbacks provided me an opportunity to adjust my agenda to better impact the needs of the culture in which I was now immersed. Within the first week, it became clear that the Serbs needed training and empowerment as leaders of a social movement to cast aside judgments and preconceived dispositions regarding their fellow citizens of different ethnicity. As my time in the region lengthened, I discovered that this perspective enriched the programs I organized, meetings I held, service projects in which I participated, and interviews I conducted. Both formal and informal conversations became invaluable. The immediate impact was more discernible.

My original measurable goals were:

- create a three-year strategic plan for the Serbian leaders at LEC, and
- establish a youth-engagement program mobilizing youth (connected with LEC and comprised of both ethnic Romas and ethnic Serbs) who educate other youth on the necessity of reducing discrimination between the two communities.

There is tangible evidence of these results. However, I met these goals in a way that I could not have conceived prior to my trip. In order to leave the people I met in a better condition than

when I had arrived, I needed to be flexible and revise the course of action. Summer life in Serbia is much less structured than my life in the United States. Learning to work with their cultural norm rather than restricting their flexibility became critical.

Conclusion:

Serbia's past atrocities and present trials are rarely addressed in the classroom in the United States. Granted little space in textbooks and dismissed as an insignificant nation in the global arena, often the experience of the ethnic Romas in Serbia mirrors the treatment

of marginalized nations in the United States. This void provides an excellent opportunity to educate global partners on the challenges facing Serbia and the success of grassroots youth leadership training on transforming life within the larger community. Currently I'm compiling the various

Roma in Serbia: A marginalized, ethnic minority in a sprouting democracy

Appendix A

A brief overview of the interviews Kaitlynn Bartz conducted while in Serbia, June-August 2012. During the course of my adventure, I crossed paths with several incredible individuals who each had a story to share. By the time I returned to my university in Washington, DC their stories were woven into my own. Below you will find the perspectives they tried to share with me. Their stories are unique because they are innately individual; however, their messages are symbolic of others in the region and can aid in bridging the cultural gap.

"It is better to work in spiritual way than to be a teacher...Before Christ, my dream was to be the President of Roma in Serbia...but the best way is to work for the LORD and then to help the Roma people is the better way. All political men they know me and when I went to Christ many of them said I was crazy – out of mind. And now after many years they see my work and come to the church and say you chose the better way than we because of the very bad discrimination for the Roma people in Serbia. When someone is changed spiritually, they change their whole life."

~ Pastor Sherif, Roma congregation, Leskovac Evangelical Church

"Theater plays allow us to have an open discussion. Some know there is discrimination, but they don't understand the feeling. They see that it is painful and not fair. This is often the first time for them to work together in the same space. There is no place or opportunity where young people can work together, meet together.

"They don't understand the cultural similarities they have. They have the same needs, but life for Roma is more difficult...putting them in the same situation makes them feel they are equal, which is true."

"It's hardest for young Roma girls to find possibilities in their own families."

"The value of investing in one person is the best opportunity for development." "The greatest barrier to change is motivation...nobody participates, nobody has the opportunity to see they have the same problems."

~ Jelena Despotović, Children and Youth Coordinator for PBILD

"(Humanitarian aid) is help, really help...but it is (only) one kind of help, emergency. It is a different kind of help to start something where we can earn our own income" ~ Daniel, Serb from Leskovac

"We use the same approach when reaching out to Roma and Serb youth."

"We see a lot of voluntary segregation...we offered a hand [to a young Roma boy], but he would not take it."

"First we need to find leaders of the Roma population. Then we include that leader and he includes the rest. The trouble is finding the leaders."

~ Predrag Jovic Director of Youth and Sports for the City of Leskovac

We need to make warm environment for non-believers: with welcome, with hug, with love, with compassion. [Serving others] is not an excuse to be tired; if we are tired something is wrong with us. Jesus said 'Come to me and I will bring you rest.' So if you are with Jesus it is not possible for you to be tired. Physically and spiritually, you cannot be tired from people." ~ *Sladja, Volunteer for Leskovac Evangelical Church and Director of the LEC's humanitarian relief*

"I see big discrimination. It is very serious."

"Roma are part of our country...[there are differences between Roma and Serb] but difference doesn't mean better or worse, different is just different."

"I'm still. I'm not tired. Sometimes I have low energy, but it is not as important because I have women...who trust each other. Don't look at color of skin, faith [religion], sexual orientation, it's not important. We are persons. We are women. Don't be a hypocrite, but be honest. Be yourself." ~ *Executive Director of Women for Peace: Leskovac*

Gypsy kids are very clever and smart..." - *Zoran (L)* "...but it all depends on the economic power of the city." - *Rama (R)*

"There might be 10 smart kids (in a Roma family), but it depends on the economic power of the family how far they will go in school." "Our church is effective because the role of the church is to make them better people and teach them how to live an abundant life as Jesus did." (His shirt reads: "Variety is the spice of life")

~ *Zoran, Director of Leskovac Roma Culture Center and Deacon in Leskovac Evangelical Church*

"The Roma church is helping us in our work."

"Gypsy people in Serbia cannot receive that which is normal to other Serbs."

"People recognize the role of the church – not just believers, but the greater Roma people and police. When [Leskovac Evangelical Church] started among the Roma people there was less fighting among them, less stealing among them...they help with peace among Serb and Roma. Police recognize the church as a center for social work." ~ *Rama, Leskovac City Council Member and Regional Representative for the National Council of Roma Minority in Serbia*

"I want it to be better for my daughter." ~ *Ana, Volunteer for Leskovac Evangelical Church and Women for Peace: Leskovac*

"I could always tell that I had a very good childhood. I had good parents who gave me every opportunity and I was able to choose my company and friends."

"When we think about youth, the world gives lots of opportunities to young people, but the church does not. I want to give more opportunities and better opportunities so they stay in church."

"When you give young people responsibility, they will receive and do things."

"In the past, few youth finish school. Now our numbers are very good. We are talking to them through the message, teaching, and personal interactions and telling them to go to school...we teach not just through the Bible, but through real life, using 'living examples'"

"The biggest challenge now is taking marriage so young."

"There exists discrimination, not just in school, not just from friends and from school, but from teachers too. But there are some positive things. Lots of youth from the church have good friends who are Serbs. In fact, some of their closest friends are Serbs because they grew-up going to school together. They say they love to be with them because they respect them. Sometimes discrimination happens because someone wants discrimination. Our (Roma) people sometimes make our own trouble. ~ *Pastor Bojan, Roma congregation, Leskovac Evangelical Church*

"I want to help my people to have a better life, better standard, starting with this organization that was already doing work for my people." "We give books, like presents, so they can go to school." "We analyze everything, analyze our problems. We need to know the situation in order to know the solution in our community." "We need lots of projects where we work with the majority so we can get over the stereotypes. If we can develop tolerance than we can get over these stereotypes and then overcome the discrimination." "From the beginning, my desire was to help my people."

~ *Sasa Sxanojevic and Srba Sxojjkovic, Directors of a non-profit which surveys the Roma population in Vlasotince*

“People’s lives are hard, both Roma and non-Roma...poverty is not just a [problem] for Roma.”

“Unfortunately, [politics create] a problem for sustainability.”

~ Marina Babović, Project Coordinator for Governance and Social Inclusion for PBILD and a native of Serbia

“It is a big problem when people don’t have time to talk with them (the Roma) about their problems.”

“The more problems you have, the more you learn to enjoy life.”

~ Dusan Pesic, Commissioner for the Information of Public Importance for the City of Leskovac

“It is Serbia, everything is connected.”

~ Director of Social Services for the City of Leskovac.

Roma in Serbia: A marginalized, ethnic minority in a sprouting democracy

Appendix B

A visual representation of the projects Kaitlynn Bartz completed while in Serbia as well as her participation in diplomatic events.

Kaitlynn with Roma after speaking at their church service



Kaitlynn distributing humanitarian aid to both Roma, Serb



Kaitlynn supporting Serbian youth leaders at LEC



Kaitlynn with Roma and Serb youth at an English camp



Saira Husain, Fall 2012

Malnutrition and Gastroenteritis in Pakistani Children: A Feasibility Study

Project Summary:

Gastroenteritis, the inflammation of the gastrointestinal tract, is a well-known illness that plagues over 111 million children under the age of 5 around the world each year.¹ It results in acute diarrhea and often leads to severe dehydration and death. In underdeveloped countries, gastroenteritis is the leading cause of death among infants and children under the age of 5.²

In the anthropological and biological research conducted by Mumtaz et al. (2010), socioeconomic deprivation, manifested by household crowding, low maternal education,³ failure to breast feed exclusively for the first 4 to 6 months of life, using infant bottles which are difficult to clean,⁴ storing food at room temperature, failure to wash hands and dispose of feces hygienically and drinking contaminated water factor into the spread of diarrheal disease. Those infected are mostly uneducated and live in poor hygienic conditions. The children are not properly looked after and hand washing is not practiced. Children that crawl are more exposed to dirty surfaces and are therefore more vulnerable to these fecal-oral infections. Fecal to oral transmission is facilitated by insanitary conditions. The prevention of transmission involves the improvement of sanitary conditions, health education, and better nutrition (Bajolet & Chippaux-Hyppolite, 1998).

December 2012- January 2013, I spent four weeks in Peshawar, Pakistan Grant to understand the contextual and causal factors surrounding the current epidemic of gastroenteritis among children in Peshawar Province, Pakistan through questionnaires in both hospital home settings. I returned to Karachi, Pakistan this past winter to focus on the issue of malnutrition, more specifically feeding practices, and how it relates to diarrheal diseases in a bilateral cohort.

Through my research in Peshawar, I concluded that various misconceptions about teething, diaper usage, and methods of rehydration potentially lead to the propagation, recurrence and prevalence of acute gastroenteritis. Patients, nurses and even some doctors have cited teething as a cause of acute gastroenteritis. Research elucidated the facts that teething causes children pain, leading to an increase in the number of various objects the child puts in his or her mouth. While the mastication of these unhygienic objects often leads to acute gastroenteritis, the emergence of a child's teeth does not.

¹ Bloomfield, Sally F. "The Global Burden of Hygiene Related Diseases in Relation to the Home and Community." International Scientific Forum on Home Hygiene (2009): 24.

² CK King, "Managing acute gastroenteritis among children: oral rehydration, maintenance, and nutritional therapy," 2003, <<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/14627948>> (accessed November 20, 2011).

³ Fagundes-Neto, Ulysses. "Acute Diarrhea and Malnutrition: Lethality Risk in Hospitalized Infants." Journal of the American College of Nutrition 18.4 (1999): 303-308.

⁴ Mary Anne S. Baysac, "Prevention and Control of Diarrheal Diseases," 1999, <http://dcc2.bumc.bu.edu/ih887/presentatons99/Diarrh/prevention_and_control_of_diarrh.htm> (accessed November 23, 2010)

Along with this, due to socioeconomic circumstances, most acute gastroenteritis patients use cloth or no diapers as opposed to store-bought, plastic diapers. The lack of proper diapers allows for the leakage of a child's fecal material onto the secondary surface below such as the bed sheets, floor, or hands. Due to the lack of containment and proper washing practices, acute gastroenteritis is able to spread quickly and re-infect the child. Lastly, many patients cited rehydrating their sick children with chai and kava. Chai and kava are common hot beverages in Peshawar, Pakistan. While the boiling of the water ensures the safety of the drinking water, the large amounts of sugar in these drinks can make diarrhea worse and lacks important minerals necessary for the dehydrated child.⁵ Identifying the causal effects of acute diarrhea will help to determine how and where intervention is necessary.

These conclusions along with Bajolet and Chippaux-Hyppolite's assertions led to Phase II of my project which included focusing on the issue of nutrition and parental feeding styles of children under the age of five in Karachi, Pakistan.

I worked with Indus Hospital, a large, private free hospital that catered to the socioeconomically disadvantaged class in Karachi. There we administered surveys to parents of children between the ages of 6 months and 2 years. Children under the age of 2 are most vulnerable to infectious diseases and since we were looking at parental feeding styles we created our cut off at 6 months-the age when infants should begin eating solid foods. One hundred patients were screened and asked to participate in our study which consisted of three main thrusts: assessing the caregiver's feeding style, obtaining patient history and anthropometric data, and determining the patient and mother's iron levels.

The caregiver was asked a series of questions regarding their feeding style using the Caregiver's Feeding Style Questionnaire. This tool was developed and validated by Hughes to examine the role of parent-feeding style to child nutrition in minority groups in the United States (Hughes et al., 2005). Since parents may have different goals for their children's growth and development, their feeding practices may vary according to their perceptions of how well their children are doing and their ability, both financially and physically, to feed them. Child feeding practices include the level of control the parent exerts over the type and amount of food the child eats, role modeling of eating behaviors, feeding cues or prompts given to the child, and the actual mealtime environment and routines (Chaidez, 2011).

Through these interviews, we classified parents into one of four feeding styles: authoritative, authoritarian, indulgent, and uninvolved. Further data analysis on the association between parental feeding styles, mother and child BMI and socioeconomic status are being conducted.

In conclusion, we strongly believe that parental perceptions and their feeding styles impact infant nutritional health. This early nutritional health is vital in establishing a healthy gut flora that is capable of preventing the onset of diarrheal disease and better dealing with gastrointestinal diseases.

⁵ Mayo Clinic Staff. "Gastroenteritis: First Aid." <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/first-aid-gastroenteritis/FA00030> (accessed January 28, 2012).

Future work will include working in conjunction with community health workers in Pakistan on a 2-step protocol: 1. Educate parents on appropriate feeding practices 2. Educate parents on the importance of hand washing with soap. This simple, sustainable intervention will help establish practices that will aid in preventing diarrheal diseases in susceptible children.



Peshawar, Pakistan- Team I worked with



Malnutrition Clinic in Karachi, Pakistan: Before and After intravenous Oral Rehydration Solutions (ORS)



Malnutrition Clinic in Karachi, Pakistan: Before and After intravenous Oral Rehydration Solutions (ORS)

Peshawar,
Karachi,



Peshawar, Pakistan- Patients

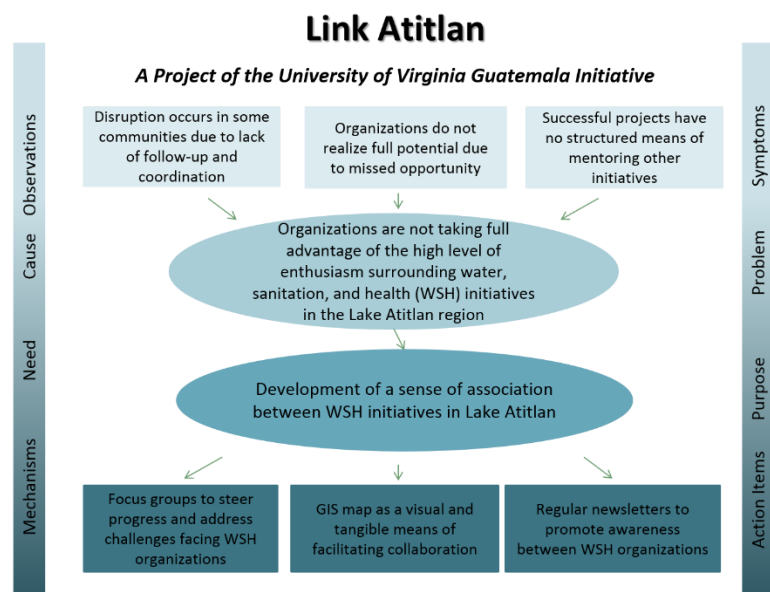
Pakistan- Outpatient Clinic
Pakistan- Me in the Malnutrition Clinic

Carolyn Pelnik, Fall 2012

A Geo Health Alliance: Collaboration to Increase Potable Water Access in Lake Atitlan, Guatemala

Proposed Objectives

In an initial trip to Lake Atitlán, Guatemala, I worked with a team through the University of Virginia Guatemala Initiative (UVAGI) to conduct a survey of water infrastructure in the lake region. Our team found that many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in the sphere of water and sanitation suffered from a lack of communication with one another, resulting in overlapping projects, inadequate follow-up, and strained resources. The proposed objective of the current project, as funded by the Laura W. Bush Traveling Fellowship, was to complete a geographic information system (GIS) map of water and sanitation initiatives in the lake region. While developing the map, our team worked alongside NGOs to solicit feedback and to create a geo-based health alliance of organizations that work on water and sanitation projects. By encouraging collaboration and effective communication, the long-term vision of this project is increased access to potable water in the Lake Atitlán region.



This current project, termed the LinkAtitlán project, addresses the symptoms depicted in the above info-graphic through a three-fold approach that combines a GIS map with in-person networking.

Rationale and Project Summary

In Guatemala, 40% of the rural poor lack a household water connection,⁶ which limits access to potable water. Consumption of contaminated water causes gastrointestinal disease that can inhibit childhood cognitive development and pose barriers sustainable development.⁷ Through the University of Virginia Guatemala Initiative (UVAGI), our preliminary survey of water infrastructure indicated a lack of communication between organizations working in the water and health sectors, resulting in project duplication, inadequate follow-up, and strained resources. To promote increased communication, we designed LinkAtitlán, an online network to consolidate project information and provide an interactive collaboration tool for organizations. In the initial pilot of LinkAtitlán,

⁶ Inter-American Development Bank, Office of Evaluation and Oversight. (2007). *Country program evaluation: Guatemala*. Retrieved from website: <http://idbdocs.iadb.org/wsdocs/getdocument.aspx?docnum=2054183>

⁷ Petri, W.A., Miller, M., Binder, H.J., Levine, M.M., Dillingham, R., & Guerrant, R.L. (2008). Enteric infections, diarrhea, and their impact on function and development. *Journal of Clinical Investigation*, 118(4), 1277 – 1290.

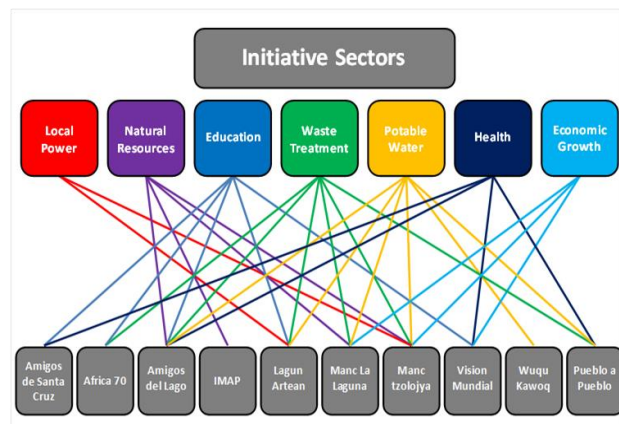
funded by the Laura W. Bush Traveling Fellowship, I, alongside other members of the UVAGI, met with community mayors and nine organizations who viewed improving project visibility and collaboration as critical for progress in the Atitlán basin. With feedback from organizations, we will create another iteration of the LinkAtitlán tool to better facilitate information sharing and collaboration among public and private water and health initiatives in the Lake Atitlán basin.

Methods

Phase I: Review of Initial Survey Findings

The findings of our initial water infrastructure survey were fundamental to the mission of LinkAtitlán. In our review of the previous survey's findings, we found:

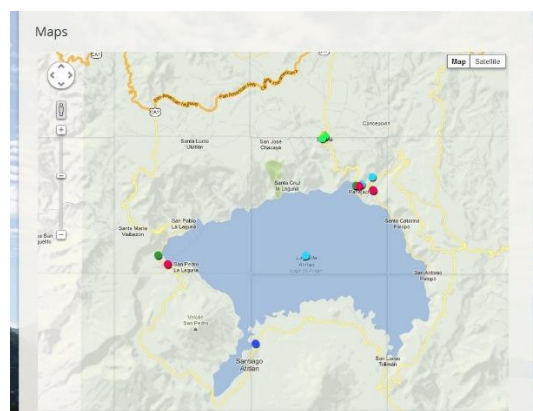
- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) tend to work across sectors: in one survey, 10 organizations worked across 7 sectors (e.g. the water, health, or education sectors). The graphic to the right depicts the variety of sectors in which the surveyed initiatives conducted their work.
- NGOs that install water filters use more than five different types of filters throughout the lake basin.
- All surveyed organizations spoke of the need for increased communication among lake-based initiatives.



The cross-sector work, variety of filters used, and expressed need for increased communication were the basis on which we began to brainstorm means of developing a basin-wide networking tool. Working across multiple sectors and the variety of water filters installed are not in themselves problematic; however, they create additional obstacles to effective communication that we felt could be mitigated through a networking tool.

Phase II: Prototype of LinkAtitlán

Noting the need for increased communication between organizations, we developed criteria for an effective networking tool. The design should 1) create a highly visible network of organizations, 2) be accessible and enjoyable to use (thereby promoting its own sustainability through organization buy-in), 3) promote active networking, as opposed to simply consolidating information passively.





LinkAtitlan




English ▾
by

HOMEABOUTMAPSDIRECTORYCOMMUNITY PROFILESFORUMLOGIN

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University of Virginia- Guatemala Initiative



UVA-GI Webpage

Dedicated to the development of mutually beneficial and sustainable relationships between the University of Virginia and the people and communities of Guatemala.

Contact Information

Background Information

Date Founded: 2006

Primary Community Partners: Santiago, San Lucas, Tzununá, Panajachel

Primary Sector: Water

Other Sectors: Health, education

Project Information

In the initial pilot of LinkAtitlán, I, alongside other UVAGI team members, met with nine partner organizations in the Lake Atitlán basin to solicit feedback on the tool. The majority of the surveyed organizations were currently featured on the website and map, and the others expressed interest in joining the LinkAtitlán initiative.

The interviewed organizations to whom we shared the prototype provided feedback in three primary areas:

- 20

- The tool should promote local, national, and international visibility of projects.
- LinkAtitlán should be maintained regularly by adding new organizations, releasing newsletters, and moderating discussion forums if the tool is to be highly interactive.

All surveyed organizations expressed the role that they felt the LinkAtitlán tool could play in increasing project effectiveness. The prototype feedback will continue to be incorporated into future iterations of the tool's design.

Future Development

The LinkAtitlán prototype will continued to be refined, particularly to incorporate the received feedback. We also project that future development will expand the tool's reach to a greater number of lake-based organizations, including both municipally-run projects and NGO-administered initiatives. Further, we plan to increase the interactivity of the website and to pursue collaborations with other communication-oriented initiatives that seek to increase collaboration among organizations in the Atitlán region.

Photo Appendix

Lake Atitlan, Guatemala—as viewed from Panajachel; this photo was taken in front of an under construction water treatment plant:



A sample of the organizations visited during the prototype pilot:

The University of Virginia Guatemala Initiative (UVAGI) team in action



Women's Agribusiness Training Program in Ngongongare, Tanzania

Lacey Williams



Project Goals: The project sought to promote women's empowerment and food security by providing a women's microfinance group in Ngongongare, Tanzania with a women's business training program, interactive community education garden, and sustainable agriculture techniques curriculum. The training provided through this program aims to increase crop yields and improve business models for Ngongongare's high population of subsistence farmers.

Project Execution: With peer researchers, my team implemented this project through a three-fold approach that integrated agriculture and business training with monitoring and evaluation throughout. Our project partnered with Jifundishe Free Library, which administers a local women's microfinance group in Ngongongare, Tanzania. Upon arrival, we conducted focus groups as well as a preliminary survey to assess the program participants' vision and expectations for the program as well as to collect baseline data that we could use as a point of comparison in our project follow-up. We found this pre-assessment highly instrumental in developing an early rapport with the women with whom we would be working.

We worked with a local agriculture specialist, based out of the Arusha Vegetable Research and Development Center (a local office of the World Vegetable Center), to design and implement the agricultural training program. By working with a local agriculture expert, we were able to ensure that the agricultural methods taught through the training were geographically and culturally relevant. The agriculture program prioritized low-cost, sustainable methods of increasing yield over the long-term and included such topics as crop rotation, pest management, composting, and drip irrigation. The agriculture training was implemented through use of a community education garden, also designed and built as a component of our Davis project. Access to the garden enabled the curriculum to be highly participatory and enhanced learning objectives by enabling the program participants to experience agricultural techniques in practice.

The agriculture training was implemented concurrently with a business education program. Our project adopted this joint agriculture-business approach to appeal to the significant portion of our program participants who received loans for agriculture-based businesses. Of the women who used microloan financing for non-agriculture businesses, many still practice subsistence farming. The intent of the program, thus, was to provide business training that could enhance the profitability of the microloan

recipients' businesses generally as well as to provide agriculture instruction that increased the productivity of both subsistence and commercial farmers.

We developed the business component of the curriculum with assistance from the international NGO, Global Grassroots, which provides business training to women on a grassroots level worldwide. The business curriculum sought to provide the women with basic profit maximization, accounting, and business planning knowledge that would increase the profitability of their businesses.

Through the strong support network provided by the staff at Jifundishe, project implementation took place smoothly. In fact, our largest anticipated obstacle was attrition throughout the course; contrary to our expectations, we actually acquired additional program participants throughout the duration of the program. We also found that working closely with a translator enabled us to overcome language and cultural barriers that could have inhibited curriculum instruction. Our translator served not only as a language assistant, but also as a cultural ambassador.

We did, however, encounter certain obstacles in the logistical execution of the project. The execution of rigorous program evaluation in a community that was unfamiliar with social science research presented difficulties. We found that some of the challenges could be mitigated by working closely with local staff who were able to assist us in developing our pre- and post-surveys in a culturally sensitive manner.

Our training reached approximately 60 women, whose family members total more than 200. In providing agricultural and business training, our project aimed to improve crop yields and business effectiveness, thereby resulting in greater agency and income for women. Our long-term vision is that women will invest additional income in their families, and in doing so will reduce rates of childhood malnutrition and increase access to education. The sustainability and continuation of our project is assisted by its institutional home in an established NGO that has the financial and human resources to offer continued education programming. Throughout the project's implementation, we documented all curriculum materials and worked closely with NGO staff to ensure that the curriculum could be replicated in the future should another cohort of microloan recipients desire a similar training program.

Project Reflection: Through skills workshops and group discussions, the women in our program gained confidence in themselves and motivation to improve their businesses. In the short-term, the women are able to bring added energy and creativity to their families and businesses. In the long-term, our project aims to increase peace through greater food security and gender empowerment. Through the program's joint emphasis on agriculture and business, the project aimed to both improve cultivation techniques and business profitability that will ultimately result in greater agency and resources for the women and their families. This in turn fosters community peace through greater access to opportunity and ability to resist violence.

By working closely with local women, we gained a new perspective on effective community development. The women's vibrant personalities and strong desire to improve life for their families illustrated the importance of solutions coming from within the community. The project also highlighted that sustainable change occurs over long period of time, often several generations. Some campaigns for community development seek to rapidly reduce poverty. Though such campaigns are noble, this project underscored the obstacles that short-term initiatives face in making a lasting impact. From this project, we gained a deep appreciation for the long-term capacity building that occurs through sustainable improvements to education and health.

Acknowledgements: This project was collaborative effort by University of Virginia students and faculty, the Jifundishe Free Library staff and community, the Global Grassroots non-profit, and additional funding provided by the University of Virginia Jefferson Public Citizen Program and Davis Projects for Peace. Many thanks to our Jifundishe mentors Sudi Abdallah and Elly Mbises; my fellow student

researchers Carolyn Pelnik, Porter Nenon, Ellen Chapin, and Emily Marshall; our UVA faculty mentor Christine Mahoney; and Global Grassroots founder Gretchen Wallace.

APPENDIX: Photographs





Marissa Reitsma
Summer, 2013

The Intersection of Culture and Health: A Mixed-Method Investigation into the Effect of Ethnic Affiliation on Clinical Outcomes in HIV-Infected Kenyans

Project Summary:

I had the opportunity to travel to Kenya and conduct formative qualitative research on the interaction of culture and health. Through semi-structured interviews, I investigated whether there were associations between ethnic affiliation and HIV treatment failure. Several themes arose when analyzing interviews, including the influence of stigma, alcohol use, and alternative medicine. Next, I conducted a chart review of HIV-positive patients in order to obtain information necessary for a quantitative analysis of correlates of treatment failure. Data collected included ethnic affiliation, alcohol use, and clinic travel time. The results of my mixed methods analysis emphasize the need for additional research on the intersection of culture and health in Kenya. Opportunities for interventions include partnerships with providers of alternative medicine, small group interventions addressing stigma and health concerns of men, and addressing reported high rates of alcohol consumption.

Motivation:

The HIV epidemic in Kenya has claimed more than 1.7 million lives, orphaned more than 1.1 million children, and it continues to spread, with more than 100,000 new infections in 2011. Not only does HIV cause substantial morbidity and mortality in infected individuals, but it also causes deleterious effects on families, communities, and countries. Antiretroviral therapy (ART) can delay progression to AIDS and allow infected individuals to live healthy and productive lives. Culturally appropriate treatment is an essential component of quality care, yet there is little research on the way that culture affects HIV outcomes in Kenya. Utilizing qualitative and quantitative research to understand Kenyan culture, I aimed to improve treatment and care of HIV-positive individuals living in Kenya by identifying cultural institutions that may affect health.

Objectives and Specific Aims:

The objective of this research project was to investigate whether there are cultural institutions that may affect HIV transmission, adherence to HIV clinic appointments and HIV medications, and treatment failure.

Specific Aims:

- 1) Conduct a comprehensive literature review to identify cultural institutions in Kenya that may affect HIV transmission, adherence to clinic appointments, adherence to antiretroviral therapy, and treatment failure
- 2) Discuss findings from the literature review and identify additional cultural institutions affecting health through semi-structured formative qualitative interviews with Kenyan clinicians and social scientists
- 3) Quantitatively evaluate whether certain cultures or cultural institutions are associated with treatment failure in a cohort of HIV-positive patients
- 4) Identify areas for further research and intervention development

Findings and Future Work:

Through the literature review and qualitative interviews, I identified many cultural factors that may contribute to HIV transmission and clinical outcome. Certain factors, such as acceptability of male circumcision, polygamy, wife inheritance, widow cleansing, and disco funerals vary between ethnic communities in Kenya. This highlights the importance of considering culture when designing interventions, conducting research, and assessing HIV risk. Other factors, such as poverty and alcohol use, were more pervasive. Stigma was identified as a factor significantly contributing to HIV transmission and poor clinical outcomes in all communities.

Culturally relevant messages may improve acceptability of HIV education. Through the interview process, I noticed that the burden of HIV stigma might prevent individuals, especially men, from seeking and adhering to care. Although there are many novel small group interventions focused on women occurring throughout sub-Saharan Africa, men may also benefit substantially from small group interventions. Alcohol use was also noted many times during interviews as a risk factor for transmission and poor adherence. Behavioral interventions addressing alcohol consumption may help to reduce HIV transmission and improve clinical outcomes of patients.

In order to explore the factors identified through literature review and the interviews, additional qualitative and quantitative research should be conducted. It will be especially important to speak with community members, preferably influential leaders from different ethnic communities. A study specifically examining the effects of culture on HIV transmission and treatment outcome is necessary to generate actionable data.

This project was a starting point that identified possible clinically relevant factors and demonstrated feasibility of a study examining culture and health in Kenya. In the future, ethnic affiliation should be considered in all research projects, because it plays an important role in shaping behavior.

Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank the generous support of the Laura W. Bush Traveling Fellowship for making my trip and research possible. I would also like to thank all my Kenyan collaborators, my research advisor, and the Brown International Scholars Program.



Working on the farm

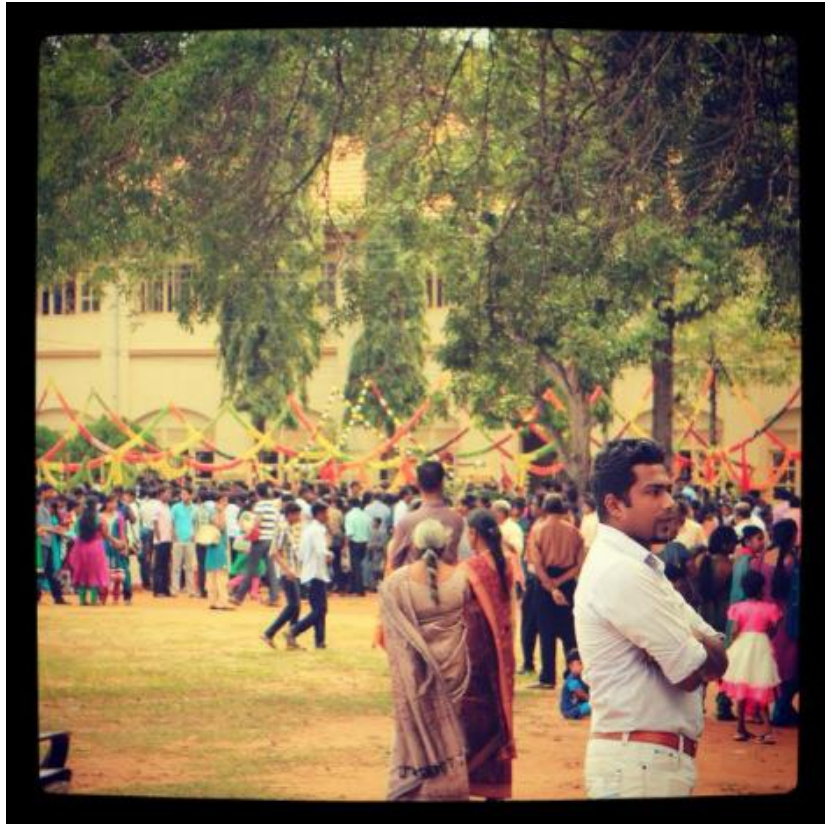


Women making jewelry at the craft workshop



Jumping with a Masai man

Unconventional Means: A Reflection on my Time in Sri Lanka



The plans were set. We were crashing convocation. So I exaggerate – but not really. We had spent all of Friday registering women and farmers to GrowLanka, a mobile system I co-founded back in 2012 that sends sector-specific job alerts to subscribers. Midday I broke away for a meeting with MAS, an employer in the northern part of the country whom we were collaborating with, and ended up talking to a young woman working there. She suggested we try talking to young people about our system. “They could really use it,” she told me. “And you know what – tomorrow is my convocation at Jaffna University — there will be like 1000 people there that you could tell about GrowLanka.” And the lightbulb went on. She called her dean at the school and arranged for us to have a table set up outside of the University. We made a big GrowLanka banner and printed up instructions for subscribing people to the system. I made a gazillion more subscription cards and started cutting them out. We sent out a facebook alert. Everything happened so quickly, it was bizarre. But there we were on Saturday morning at 6:30 am leaving Vavuniya to make the 3 hour drive along the A9 highway to Jaffna.



We set up shop right near one of the gate entrances. The grounds were filled with people. Garlands, lights, colors. Ladies in pretty saris and gents dressed up in suits. It was clearly a day for celebration. I felt like one of the wedding crashers. But it was a venue that made so much sense for GrowLanka. Here these young people were graduating from college or from their degree program and inevitably, they would be looking for a job.

As soon as we got there, people rushed to help us set up. Young men helped us hang up our banners and our driver and translator for the day started telling people about GrowLanka. We got about ten people signed up in one go. But then what

was really astonishing to me was how they stuck around. The student body president of the junior class was with us. They called their friends over, explained the system to them, and helped us get more people subscribed.



As more and more people gathered around our table, more stopped to hear about our work. At times I felt like I was at the floor of some massive arena with a bunch of people peering down at me. The students peppered us with many questions — about the nature of our project, about our service, about why we were doing it, the jobs they might see come across the system. It was busy work. There were ebbs and flows of people for certain but more often than not our hands and eyes and mouths were occupied with completely different tasks all at once.

Amidst the chaos, there were a few things that really made me pause. For one, the men were always eager to sign up. They questioned us less. The women hung back in groups. Once the crowd died down, I'd see groups of women flung out a couple feet from our table. They'd send over an emissary to our table—the woman who, I suspect, spoke the best English from among them. She'd ask us many thoughtful questions and take her measure of us. And then she'd take a whole handful of subscription cards and get the women in her group to sign up from an area removed from our table. Eventually, she'd come back, gifting us with a whole load of papers. Many women (and I didn't even realize this until I started data entering all these new subscribers) entered several numbers— not just for themselves but too for their kids, husbands, family members. Women, I found, were far more timid to approach us – just as they were far more discerning of our services. They proved to be some of the best advocates for our system.

But beyond anything else, the thing that sticks out to me most was the exchanges I had with the people on the ground there. A second year Tamil law student came to the table with his Sinhalese friend. They were talking in Sinhalese so I interjected. He said you know I'm so glad you're doing this – you don't even know how much this is needed. The people here really suffered



during the war. He explained to me the trials of finding a job, features not all that uncommon in post-conflict environments. He explained to me that a lot of people had taken 2-3 times longer to complete their degree because of the fighting going on. Some students couldn't go home because during term time their home villages turned into battlefields. The library on campus was burned one night. Students couldn't do internships over summers because businesses had left the region – meaning that when they graduated, they didn't have any experience to market to potential employers. All these things and more he ticked through methodically and then he turned over his subscriber card and wrote a note about the specific kind of job he was looking for — beyond just the routine category (medicine, law, government

work, etc.) that our system required users to input. I could see then how he really believed in our system. That got to me. How ten minutes later he came back with his friends and explained our set-up to them. How he shook my hand. The promise in his eyes, his belief in our system pushed me even harder; it is this moment that is now sealed in my memory, one that I think about each time as we make plans to scale and grow GrowLanka to better service beyond the north.

There are a lot of people who don't know what to think about post-conflict Sri Lanka. Westerners and journalists alike worry that peace is only temporary; that the violent ethnic tensions that caused turmoil for so long will fester and take root once more. But when I think back to the day I spent at Jaffna University, I can't help but think about the people I met—the students who were just like me—who want so badly for everything to work out, who loved Sri Lanka not as Sinhalese or as Tamils but as Sri Lankans. There are many people who would like to bet against Sri Lanka right now but my work on GrowLanka this past winter taught me that I'm not one of them.

Summary of Trip: Progress made on GrowLanka

- Subscribed 400+ new individuals
- Established new partnership with the Sri Lankan Ministry of Youth Affairs and Skills Development: On the ground, we quickly discovered that it was not just individuals in the north—particularly farmers and war widows—who found our system useful but too young people. Youth unemployment is currently a problem of much concern in Sri Lanka. During my trip, I pitched GrowLanka to the Director of Information Technology at the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Skills Development offering to donate the technology that GrowLanka uses to the Ministry. After a meeting with the Director General of the Ministry at the end of my stay in Colombo, I signed a memoranda of understanding with their office and am currently working with a team of government developers and the developers who created our GrowLanka system to make certain modifications to our system such that it fits the server specifications for the government. Thereafter, we plan to transition control of our system to the Youth Ministry, allowing for long term sustainability of GrowLanka's service at an affordable price to be covered by the Sri Lankan government.
- Consulted with our developers to add more rigorous analytics to our administrative dashboards
- Ran subscriber workshops in Northern Sri Lanka and trained local Youth Affairs officials in the northern Vavuniya province to run such workshops with potential new subscribers in the coming months

Expenses:

Description	Cost
Flight (Roundtrip: Washington DC → Colombo)	\$1859
Accommodations in Vavuniya	\$20 x 10 = \$200
Accommodations in Jaffna	\$30 x 3 = \$90
Accommodations in Killinochchi	\$20 x 4 = 80
Internal Transportation (between Vavuniya, Jaffna, and Killinochchi + within Colombo)	\$140
Translation Services	\$20
GrowLanka Banner	\$50
School Supplies – to make subscription cards, advertising posters, etc.	\$5
Jaffna University Table Rental	\$24
Roundtrip Train from Colombo to Vavuniya	\$34
Accommodations in Colombo	Covered (Family)
Workshops/Field Costs	\$35
Total	\$2537